

FLOWER OF THE GORSE

Drawings by W. Berger

By LOUIS TRACY

CHAPTER VII (Continued). Mischief

AND at that moment Yvonne herself came across the Place from Le Sellin's, having undergone a process of "fitting" to which her mother was unequal. The two were alike even in height and figure. If anything, Mrs. Carmac was rather more slender than her daughter, because the girl's muscles were well developed by long walks and plenty of exercise in an outrigger, whereas the older woman had been self-indulgent and frail all her life.

Both men stood up. She noticed their action, and protested smilingly.

"Please don't rise, Mr. Raymond," she said. "I hope you don't think I have neglected you; but I have inquired from Dr. Garnier several times as to your well-being, and I knew you were in good hands here, while my own time has been occupied in looking after Mrs. Carmac, who was really very ill until this morning. As for you, Captain Popple, I didn't need to glance twice at you to see that a small thing like a shipwreck hadn't disturbed you in the least."

"Miss," said Popple, "you'll believe me, I know, when I say I didn't reckonize you upstairs. Sink me! I couldn't imagine that any young lady could look so pretty in two different ways."

She laughed delightedly, for the first time since the doleful twin sisters, Sorrow and Suffering, had discovered her. "Now I understand why a sailor has a lass in every port," she said. "You cannot fail to be a success with the girls if you talk to them in that fashion."

Popple had never before been accused of being a ladykiller. He grinned, and his red face grew purple. "Me, Miss?" he cried. "Bless your little heart! I was on'y tellin' the solemn truth. You looked like a seafarin' angel when I saw you through the scud an' spray dashin' over that reef. An' now—well, if the folk hereabout want to advertise Pont Aven, they ought to put you on a poster."

"Captain, I must not have my head turned by such compliments. Wait till Tuesday, our market day, and you will meet dozens of girls who put me in the shade. Is your arm fairly comfortable, Mr. Raymond?"

The secretary, whose eyes had glowered on every unstudied poise and trick of expression that stamped Yvonne as Mrs. Carmac's daughter, even to a markedly clear enunciation, and an almost coquettish sidelong glance when specially amused, had been given time to collect his faculties by Popple's tribute of admiration.

"Yes, thank you, Miss Ingersoll," he said, striving to tune his harsh voice to a note of reverential courtesy. "If I possessed Captain Popple's gift of speech, I should try to vie with him in imagery. May I say that I have always considered Mrs. Carmac as one of the most strikingly handsome women I have ever seen, so I can well appreciate the fact that you are her niece?"

"Lorry," cried the smiling girl, "come out here and tell these flatterers how horrid I can be at times!"

Raymond turned so quickly that he wrenched his arm slightly, and was hard put to it to suppress a groan. Tollemache was standing at the open window directly behind the seat that Popple and himself had occupied. How long had he been there? What had he heard? Certainly the path of the evildoer was not being made smooth, and the scheming secretary had experienced various thrills in the course of one short hour.

"Mr. Raymond is a shrewd judge of womankind, I am sure," said Tollemache quietly, "and he would never accept my estimate of you, Yvonne. Will you be home for tea? And may I come? I have some news for you."

Yvonne simply announced that he would find her at the cottage about four o'clock. Then, with a hand-wave to her friend and a graceful bow to the others, she hurried to the annex, running into Peridot as she went.

AII, bon jour, Ma'm'selle!" he cried, smiling broadly and flourishing his cap. "Did Monsieur Tollemache tell you what a fool I made of myself the other night?"

"No," she said. "Nothing Monsieur Tollemache could say would shake my high opinion of you. How is Madeleine? I haven't seen her since the supper party."

"Neither have I, Ma'm'selle," and the merry Breton face suddenly became woebegone.

"What then? Have you quarreled?"

"She too was vexed with me."

"I'll put that right, Peridot. Kenavo." [Breton for "Au revoir."]

"Kenavo, Ma'm'selle," and Peridot strolled toward the quay, but not without a sharp glance at the man whom he had gulled so thoroughly.

"Lord luv a duck!" sighed Popple, "I wish my eddica-



tion hadn't been neglected when I was a nipper. I wasn't brought up. I was fetched up. Just listen to them two! Well, I'll bear in the direction of the telegraph office. I'm expectin' a wire from Brest about a diver. So long, Mr. Raymond."

"Goodby, Captain. If you want me during the next two hours, I shall be in my room."

POPPLE lumbered away, and Raymond would have gone to the annex had he not been stayed by Tollemache.

"A word with you, Mr. Raymond. I want to explain that Mr. Ingersoll and his daughter are my closest friends."

The secretary wheeled round slowly. He had no fear of this stalwart young American, whom he classed with the well dressed, athletic, feather-brained "nuts" of British society.

"I think you are to be envied," he said smilingly.

Tollemache did not smile. His frank features were thought-laden and stern. Yvonne would have read his expression unerringly. Lorry was troubled but determined.

"I am not parading the friendship for any other reason than as a warning that I shall not tolerate any prying into their affairs," he said, evidently choosing the words with care.

Raymond affected vast astonishment. "If you overheard the conversation between Captain Popple and me, you must be aware that I knew little or nothing about Mr. Ingersoll and Mademoiselle Yvonne," he retorted. "That wasn't your fault, I imagine."

"I don't understand what you are driving at. Suppose I have shown some interest in them, isn't it reasonable—people to whom I owe my life?"

"A most excellent sentiment, Mr. Raymond. Don't forget it, and wander into bypaths, where you will most certainly meet me. And I'm a big, hulking fellow, you know, who is likely to block the way."

"I have done nothing to deserve the implied threat."

"And again I say that I'll lick the stuffing out of anyone who so much as tries to annoy my friends."

"I have no wish to feel otherwise than exceedingly grateful to them, and I cannot allow you or any other person to dictate to me in the matter. Your remarks are—incomprehensible."

Tollemache gave him no further reply than a steady stare, which discomfited Raymond far more than any words. With an angry sniff he abandoned the contest, and walked unsteadily across the irregular cobblestones that paved the roadway.

CHAPTER VIII. The Tightening of the Net

IN the ordinary course of events the mortal remains of Walter Carmac would have been inclosed in a leaden shell and transhipped to the United States for burial; but a woman's whim intervened. Mrs. Carmac suddenly decreed that the interment should take place at Nizon. Pont Aven possesses no cemetery of its own. Nizon, perched on the plateau of a neighboring hill, provides a final resting place for dwellers in the valley. Thither was borne in state a huge casket containing the body of the dead millionaire.

Such a funeral had not been seen at Pont Aven in many a year. The village turned out en masse. By that time everyone knew of the extraordinary coincidence that brought Yvonne to the rescue of a wrecked vessel that had her aunt on board. When the news spread that the woman was immensely rich local interest rose to boiling point.

Many and various, therefore, were the conjectures

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

YVONNE INGERSOLL, the charming daughter of an American artist, had lived with her father at Pont Aven in Brittany ever since her early infancy. She was loved in somewhat slavish fashion by Laurence Tollemache, an intimate friend of her father's, a young American of apparently small income, who was without definite aim, obviously an idler; but for all that a trifle mysterious and of rare resources. Thus, he made the perilous circle of Sainte Barbe's tower, a feat that had killed some of those who attempted it, without a tremor.

These three and "Peridot," a Breton fisherman, went to Le Pouldu in the sardine boat Hironnelle. This was an arduous trip at best, and on the return the voyagers, by a remarkable feat of bravery, saved all aboard the wrecked yacht Stella, with the exception of the owner.

The widow of the yacht owner, Mrs. Stella Carmac, was the divorced wife of Ingersoll, and mother of Yvonne, who had deserted Ingersoll in the veriest infancy of her daughter. Ingersoll was for fleeing from Pont Aven at once; but he learned too late that Yvonne knew and would not desert her mother. Therefore they all decided to do nothing, but await events. Yvonne decided to pose as her mother's niece, to avoid scandal.

Harvey Raymond, Carmac's former private secretary, learned the true relationship of the two women, and started working out a plan to blackmail Mrs. Carmac. He was much flustered when he found that she had employed divers to recover her jewel box from the wrecked yacht.

of the crowd as soon as it was seen that the widow, who insisted on attending the ceremony, was not accompanied by her niece. She was escorted to a carriage by her husband's nephew, a tall, slim, dark-featured young man of aristocratic appearance. In a second carriage were seated Bennett, the lawyer, head of the firm of Bennett, Son & Hoyle, an elderly man who had convancing and mortgage stamped on his shrewd yet kindly face; Captain Popple, hectic in a suit of black; and Raymond, looking smaller and more dejected than ever in his mourning attire. That was all, in so far as relatives and friends were concerned.

The third and last carriage contained a local notary, the Mayor of Pont Aven, and Dr. Garnier.

Mrs. Carmac's unexpected decision that her husband should be buried in Brittany was made known only when it was impossible for others to come from a distance. With one exception, the steward whose ankle was sprained, the crew of the Stella had been sent to England; so the millionaire was followed to the grave by few who were acquainted with him in life. But the village saw to it that the cortege lost nothing in dignity or size. Gendarmes, custom house officials, and various town functionaries marched behind the carriages. Half a dozen sailors of the French marine yielded to the national love of a spectacle, and fell into line. Then came the townsfolk in serried ranks, the Breton garb of men and women adding a semi-barbaric touch of color.

A PARIS correspondent of a New York daily expressed the opinion to a colleague that the bereaved wife had acted right in burying her husband within sight of the sea that had claimed him as a victim.

"At first," he said, "I thought it a somewhat peculiar proceeding. Now I begin to understand. If I had any choice in the matter, I should certainly prefer to find my last home in this peaceful little spot rather than fill lot number so-and-so in a crowded cemetery."

"Tastes differ," said the other. "Personally I'd like to have my ashes bottled and put in a window overlooking Broadway. Who comes in for all the money?"

"The widow, I'm told."

"Doesn't young Fosdyke get a slice?"

"Don't know. No good trying to worm anything out of Bennett."

"Fosdyke looks like a Southern Frenchman. He's English, I suppose?"

"Yes, by birth and residence. But his father was an American,—came over with a racing crowd in the '80's,—and married a pretty Creole."

"Oh, is that it?"

"I understand there's a drop of negro blood in the family too; away back, perhaps, but unmistakable. Did you ever meet Carmac?"

"No."

"A tremendous fellow; but years ago he was as thin as Fosdyke."

"How did they make their money?"

"Cotton, and backing the North during the Civil War. That's why they left the States. The pure-blooded Southerners didn't like 'em anyway, and the men who fought under Lee and Stonewall Jackson would have tarred and feathered the whole tribe afterward."

"What's this I hear about a niece discovered in Pont Aven by the lady?"

"Haven't you seen her?"

"No."

"Then take my advice, and quit by the next